The pub at the end of the road

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The pub at the end of the road

by Moonstruckidiot

Summary

The author decided Will needs a night down the Pub

OR

Will leaves a crime scene and ends up at a pub in the middle of no where, its a refuge for dark supernatural beings and no human is meant to be able to enter. The Landlord, one Hannibal Lecter, decides his unusual guest is worth getting to know.

Notes

Novice writer - read at own risk :-) no beta

Very, very brief references to the Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe and the Wizard of OZ

So i learned something today if you upload a draft to Ao3 and work on it for a week or two when you do post it it goes to the date it was uploaded not posted, silly me. Try again :-)

See the end of the work for more notes

Will is all but running, scrambling uphill feet fighting against small stones and dirt threatening to upend him. His mind solely focused on reaching his car and driving he doesn't care where just any place that's not a crime scene. Holding the keys tight in his hand, so tight they'll leave an indent, he yanks the door open, throws his ass into the car seat and jams the keys in the ignition. Dust and Jack's booming voice follow him as his car screeches off the gravel track and onto road. Today that tiny bit of self preservation not sacrificed to the chant of 'your saving lives' decided he couldn't look, it was too much and if someone else died well at least it wasn't him.

It's hard focusing on the road ahead, he's struggling to calm his breath and a headache is threatening to white out his vision. So Will isn't really thinking when he dumps the car by the side of the road and starts to walk, unsure of where he is or where he is heading. Shoulders hunched, hands fisted tight in his pockets he walks and walks passing people, buildings and vehicles, it gets much quieter and the space opens up. Dry swallowing Aspirin takes the edge off the pain but he's left with a bitter tang in his throat that he can't get rid off. He normally enjoys long walks, he does it often enough with his dogs but not for what must be the best part of six hours and not in the shoes he's wearing, they're rubbing the back of his heels raw. It doesn't help that he's not drank or eaten anything and he's starting to feel a little light headed, he keeps going though until, set slightly back from the road, a large building appears.

Mid afternoon folds into late evening before Will comes to a standstill outside the Stags Head, Public House its name discernible from a painted wooden sign. The sign's background is glossy black and at its centre the gilt bronze head of a stag with fearsome antlers. Numerous small mullion windows line the front of the building, table lamps cast a glow out into the late evening. Ivy winds up and over its two storey's, there is an archway in the middle of the building leading to what looks to be a cobbled courtyard. Really not something one would expect to see in deepest Minnesota, fuck no, that was last week, for the life of him Will can't remember where he is today. Wherever he is, this bar, it seems far too grand for a bar, doesn't seem to fit in, its something he's seen flicking though magazines at the dentist, advertising "come to ye olde world England." He figures he is lying face down in a ditch somewhere because this cant be real, but it seems cosy and inviting so he stoops his head a little and walks through the open door.

Light spills from recessed spotlights onto rough hewn stone walls, there are some oil paintings of hunting scenes but Will doesn't stop to look at them. Directly in front of him is a large wooden staircase with the sort of bannister kids love to slide down, voices, some laughing, drift down. Hanging over the top landing is a large chandelier, Will wonders if this is some fancy country club and perhaps he should just go back the way he came. As he turns he notices a sign above a dark wooden door to his right, it reads 'Public Bar.' Will decides he might as well pop his head round the door, he can always retreat if he feels out of place, and he could do with resting his feet. He pushes the door, holds his breath and is relieved to find the room is mercifully quiet. A tall man, holding up a glass, checking for dust Will presumes, appears to be the only other occupant of the room. If the minute trace of surprise and interest that flickers across the barman's face is anything to go by they don't get many new people here, which would be a shame as its a nice place. Will props himself against the oak bar, which runs along the left side of the room, pushes his glasses back onto the bridge of his

sweaty nose then takes in the mixture of repurposed church pews, long scrubbed pine tables, large comfortable leather sofa's and oak coffee tables.

"Its quiet in here," says Will speaking to the room rather than the person behind the bar.

"It will get busy in a few hours," replies the barman, "you look like someone who could do with a drink." A napkin appears in front of Will quickly followed by a long glass of water. Taking a moment to appreciate the cold feel against his clammy hand Will tilts his head back draining all the liquid without a pause. Placing the glass down with a dull thump, he wipes his mouth with the back of his hand, "thanks for that."

"Another?"

"I could do with something a bit stronger."

"You've come to the right place," says the barman smiling whilst extending his hand, "my name is Hannibal."

"Oh, yeah, I'm Will," he rubs his palm on his trouser leg before shaking hands he doesn't make eye contact, he simply flicks up to the man's cheek bones, before dropping his gaze back to his own fingernails. He's mildly embarrassed to find he's picking at a groove in the old wooden bar top, Hannibal just gives him an all seeing smile.

"A pleasure to meet you Will, what can I get you?" Will looks at the drinks on display, he recognises many of the names but they seem higher end than he'd get at his local supply store.

"Oh whiskey please, nothing expensive." Turning his back to the bar his attention wanders to well stocked bookcases lining a small recess.

"I like to have something for everyone, you'll find everything from fishing to Dante to Egyptian hieroglyphs." Will hears from over his shoulder.

"I might have to see what you have on fishing." He says, his back still resolutely turned, lifting his eyes to heaven he makes a silent plea that this barman isn't the overly friendly type.

"Be my guest," says Hannibal before adding, "some food might go well with your drink."

Hackles rise, just slightly, *not someone else who thinks they know what's best for me*. A well timed rumble of his stomach prompts Will to be more forgiving, after all Hannibal is just being a good host. Now no longer filled with an overwhelming need to keep moving, Will feel's ravenous, he turns to find Hannibal holding out a menu taking it his eyes skim over, 'Hannibal Lecter would love to have you for dinner,' then move down an extensive list of dishes. A bit too extensive given how tired he is, he takes the easy way out, "it all sounds good, what would you recommend?"

Eyes quietly take Will in, "You look like you could use a hearty meal, shall I surprise you?" Its a fair assessment Will's eating habits of late have been distinctly chaotic.

“Yeah, sure.” As long as it’s edible he’s okay with anything.

Focusing on the range of bottles in front of him Hannibal hums whilst considering the fine whiskeys, his hand reaches out and settles on a squat dark brown bottle. From the other side of the bar Will is just able to make out ‘Dalmore,’ and ‘50’, something about the decanter shape and gilt lettering brings him out in a cold sweat, maybe he didn’t make himself clear enough, because it goddamn doesn’t look cheap.

“This way, please”, says Hannibal sliding out from behind the bar, “you can settle up with me at the end of the night.”

Walking a few paces behind Hannibal Will is able to fully appreciate the rather expensive and hmm, flamboyant suit gracing the other man’s frame. If words were the red cotton stitches holding the garment together they would include confident, theatrical, egotistical, maybe even distraction or concealment. Its an interesting thought but not one Will pursues as he finds himself ushered into a small nook, its semi private partly screened off from most of the room by a supporting wall, but from where he sits he can still see the bar area.

“What brings you out this way.” Hannibal asks whilst putting Will’s whiskey down on the wooden table. Will takes a sip, it tastes good, much better than the stuff he normally self medicates with, the alcohol pools straight to his feet making them leaden he can feel just how tired he is.

“I don’t know really, I just had to get away, straighten my head out.” Will isn’t the sort to share his business, especially with a stranger. He wants a night without having to think, his head is already fit to explode right over this establishments fine sofas if he can’t relieve some pressure.

“Well, consider this your refuge for the night,” and with that Hannibal gives Will a little nod and heads off to attend to some customers.

Will watches as Hannibal, most likely the owner of this establishment he concludes, threads his way past tables, chairs and a few waiting customers, his movements a perfect display of grace and strength, similar, to that of male ballet dancers. Customers gravitate to Hannibal, it is not just that he knows their names and makes polite enquires after the health of sick children or pets. Males and females alike glow under Hannibal’s attention, the man is seductive Will can see that. Sat in his secluded area, he continues to observe seemingly unnoticed. Hannibal is currently serving drinks, two glasses of red wine, to an older couple. Will cannot supress a chuckle at the thought that Hannibal is probably planning tomorrow’s specials menu whilst appearing to be spellbound by talk of a grandchild first day at school. His idle profiling is brought to a halt when dark amber eyes meet his and wink. He scowls at being caught out and his annoyance is compounded by the amused smile on Hannibal’s face. Knocking back the last dregs of his whiskey Will turns the glass upside down and pushes it across the table, he adds 'flirt' to the list of the barman’s traits. Blue eyes skitter in all directions, carefully avoiding the bar, and come to rest on a painting of an old sailing boat in some disrepair. Running away to the sea has always been a fantasy, just him, the ocean and a little boat of his own, but in the back of his mind he hears *that’ll never happen,* a heaviness settles in him. Sliding hands up his forehead, Will grips sweat dampened curls and sighs disappointed with himself. A clink on the table, as a glass of whiskey is set down, drags Will

back to shore. Hannibal's eye's lit by a flickering smile are enough for him to know he had a witness to the momentary lapse in his defences.

This time he doesn't watch as Hannibal walks away, instead he picks up a book left for him on the side of the table, 'The Habit of Rivers,' and begrudgingly adds, 'thoughtful' to the man's profile. Will opens the book and begins to read, he's not read anything but crime reports for quite some time, so its a welcome change. Just as he starts the third chapter, a plate is set down in front of him its a simple yet elegantly presented dish, the golden brown meat is complemented by diced carrot and tomato, it smells good.

Hannibal waits by Will's side as he takes the first bite,

"Its delicious," the meats seems to melt in his mouth, "what is it?"

"Its pig's heart," Will can tell from the slight tilt of Hannibal's head that his reaction is being watched with great interest.

Will shrugs, "Makes no difference to me, meat is meat," he says stuffing another forkful in his mouth.

"Some people do not like the idea of eating organs, but you are not that squeamish."

"Huh, no," Will laughs. "Who is your butcher, maybe I can call in sometime?" he asks, he doesn't really mean it, but he's not very good at small talk and it's one of those things people say.

"If I told you, I might never have the pleasure of your company again." There's amusement in Hannibal's eyes but Will decides its one puzzle he doesn't have to solve.

"Don't worry about that, I'm not much of a cook." If he wasn't trying to be polite he'd pick up the meat with his hands and gobble it down, it really is that good.

He's distracted from the conversation by the appearance of a group of men at the bar. They are huge with full beards, the sort of guys who could push Will over with a finger or rip him open with their bare hands. Will shakes that thought away, yeah they look tough but for the sake of his own sanity he has to stop seeing killers everywhere. He is irritated though that their presence has disturbed the library like peace he's been enjoying. Just as he realises he has been staring too long and he really, really doesn't want to draw attention to himself, all six of them stop, look in his direction and their eyes glow. Either he's not in Kansas anymore or he's hallucinating, Will decides the latter is the more likely explanation. Internal debate is quickly curtailed by a very real sense of the threat underlying their interest its absent of anger or hatred, but more the excitement a cat might feel when it sees a mouse, something to play with, to hunt, to kill.

Will's anxiety kicks up a notch, he takes a breath and rationalises, he's in a public place and Hannibal doesn't seem the type to tolerate any shit, but the way they stare and smile, incisors flashing, he feels they're just biding their time.

"Did they just smell me?" He asks Hannibal slightly disbelieving of his own question.

He flinches, *what the hell*, at a light touch on his shoulder as Hannibal leans in, sniffs and proclaims, “Yes, you have a rather powerful smell, a finer cologne might be in order.” Will is a little taken aback by the smell thing, but he didn’t shower this morning, an early call from Jack had him exiting his house whilst buttoning his shirt and stuffing a piece of toast in his mouth, and he’s walked miles so he’s probably a bit rank.

Directing his attention to the hairy men, Hannibal straightens, squares his shoulders and hips, and Will could swear he hears him growl. The sense of menace evaporates and just like that the guys turn and wait quietly, like chastised children, at the bar before heading to a dark corner. Will finishes his meal in peace, including a dessert Hannibal quietly nudged onto his table before leaving once more.

Just when Will is nicely full and slightly dozy, he’s eaten more food than he has done in weeks, Hannibal comes over and asks if he would like another whiskey and perhaps to sit by the fire. Thinking it couldn’t get much better than that Will lets Hannibal lead the way. No longer secluded in his little spot Will notices that the bar area has filled up quite considerably, and although he doesn’t look back he’s pretty sure each and every one of their heads turn as he walks by like in some goddam creepy horror movie.

He is led to an open fire, on either side are the biggest dog baskets he has ever seen and in each an inhabitant curled up contentedly. Will can’t quite place the breed, they are sleek, yet muscular and black as coal, they are not unlike Dobermans and yet they are not them. A lid opens, a red glowing eye looks at Will then closes. Will shakes his head, yeah the thing with eyes gives it away he’s hallucinating but he’s had some good food and whiskey so he might as well sit back, relax and enjoy.

“They are beautiful, what are their names?” Will asks looking fondly at the dogs.

“Cain and Abel, they’re brothers,” says Hannibal picking up a poker from a set of wrought iron fireplace tools and stirring the fire, embers hiss and spark like fire flies.

“I take it with names like that they don’t always get on.”

Hannibal chuckles, “No they don’t always.”

Will takes one of two chairs positioned near the fire, the heat warming the side of his face, his drink nestled in his hand, he closes his eyes, its the most relaxed he felt since, well God only knows.

“I’m amazed this spot isn’t already taken.”

“The brothers don’t take kindly to just anyone sitting near their fire, but they seem to like you.” That explains the firmness of the cushion Will is sitting on, unlike the other more lived in sofa’s scattered around the room this chair feels barely used.

“I have that effect on dogs,” Will says smiling as he feels a wet nose nudging his hand demanding to be stroked.

Hannibal quietly returns to the bar allowing Will to digest his food. Sometime later Will opens his eyes to find he once again has company, as quiet as his host is his presence is hard to miss.

“Would you care for a game of darts?” asks Hannibal

Will’s first instinct is to decline, people tend to tire of his company quickly so its easier not to bother in the first place. There is something about Hannibal though, he can’t quite put his finger on it, but he might not turn away in disgust at the quirks of Will’s character or the horrors of his mind so instead of a polite no he says, “Can’t say I’ve ever played.”

“Well, let me teach you” Will is handed three red and black feathered darts. Running a finger over the sharp point, he thinks, *lethal in the wrong hands*, *t*hen gives himself a mental slap, *Jesus not everything has to be about violence.*

Will follows Hannibal to a circular board hung on a wall in a sizeable alcove to the side of the bar.

“OK, so you have an advantage as I have no idea what I am doing.”

“I’ll give you a handicap.”

“I suspect even if I could blindfold you, you’d still win.”

“Nonsense you are probably better than you think.”

“Before you start, you’ll need a drink,” says Hannibal and Will is surprised to be handed a large glass filled with a chestnut brown liquid, he eyes it suspiciously before taking a sip only to discover that it is room temperature, and surprisingly warm.

“Ugh,” says Will eyeing the glass, disgust smeared all over his mouth, “that’s not as good as your food.”

“It is an acquired taste, but I brewed it myself and,” says Hannibal a sight curve to his mouth, “I’m sure you do not intend to offend me.” On the second sip Will finds the drink more to his liking and quickly takes a third just to be sure.

“Shouldn’t you be attending to your other customers,” asks Will as he sees a man and woman head towards the bar.

“No, they are fine, my guests are regulars and know they must pay for my services.”

Just then Will gets an awful sinking feeling, his hands move from pocket to pocket increasingly frantic, “Oh fuck, I don’t have my wallet,” he feels he might be eating his own heart its so high in his mouth.

He notices Hannibal’s sharp intake of breath and slight narrowing of eyes.

Will knows he’s going to stutter but he just wants to get the words out and make it all better, “Oh, oh my god, I, I, I could ring a friend and, err ask them to bring some money. Well, I

would if I had my phone." How the hell did he come out without his phone and wallet, Christ what is wrong with him.

"My dear Will all I will ask is that you kindly refrain ..."

Will is quite pale, or at least paler than normal, he interrupts Hannibal, "I, I'm with the FBI I wouldn't rip you off, I can drop by with the money tomorrow, I'm so sorry."

"Please calm down," there's warmth in Hannibal's tone but Will can only hear the manic pumping of his own heart, "your company is worth more than a few glasses of whiskey and a meal." Its surprising to Will to feel a hand clasp his arm, he doesn't shrug it off, but finds the slight pressure reassuring and it helps him focus. "All I ask is that you breath, centre yourself then throw your darts, and," Hannibal arches an eyebrow, "if you would kindly refrain from cursing all will be well."

Will does as he is told, he breathes, finds space in his head and throws the darts and Hannibal is right he's not so bad after all. They play for a while, more drinks are served and Hannibal does eventually win, but not by so much that Will is embarrassed, maybe that practice on the shooting range is handy for some thing.

As they walk back to the fire, Will's curiosity gets the better of him, "So, do you play darts with all your guests?" Unusually for the gifted profiler Hannibal is a difficult read but it is easy to see he is charming, he seduces his guest and they adore him but there's also a carefully maintained boundary, that's not the right word but Will isn't sure what the right one is, which most wouldn't even recognise was there. Yet here the expensively suited man is playing darts and making allowances for Will he's sure would not be made for anyone else.

"No, very few, but I thought you might find enjoyment in playing games."

"And you can tell that from what, the way I walk?" asks Will incredulously, shaking his head.

Hannibal gives Will a wry smile, "I observe, its what I do."

"Most people who know me would say the exact opposite, I don't play well with others."

"Maybe you just haven't found the right game, but I'm sure your friends and family know you better than I." *What friends,* thinks Will, apart from Alana, and its a bit messy with her, he wouldn't say he had friends. He takes a sidelong peek at Hannibal and Will cant shake the feeling this man already knows that, which is a bit disconcerting as its normally him who reads people like an open book.

"Maybe you should have been a psychiatrist." Will says with a bit more venom than he intended, and maybe its time to go back to the motel, as long as he can remember what it's called.

He picks up his jacket and doesn't give Hannibal much time to object before heading to the exit he mumbles something about coming back tomorrow to pay. The fresh air hits him and his head clears a little but not enough to figure which way he came in. Everything looks different, he cant find his bearings, to the right (the way he swears he came) is a road that

leads deeper into a wood, to his left it's pitch black, he tries to stare into and through it and he's seized with a feeling that if he takes a step forward he'll sink into its bottomless depths. So instead he follows a path that runs around the building but he still cant find the road he came in on, and its raining – its just his luck.

Just then he turns and there is Hannibal with an umbrella,

"I cant find where I came in, it all looks unfamiliar," he feels a rising sense of panic one which might overtake him if Hannibal was not stood there calm and sane, "I feel I should click my heels and say there's no place like Wolftrap, there's no place like Wolftrap," and as if they have a life of their own his heels do click, twice. Will's embarrassed at how absurd his behaviour must seem to Hannibal, but then he runs a bar so he must have seen worse, Will really hopes he's seen worse.

"Don't worry Will, its just not your time to leave, come back inside you are wet through." The statement is slightly odd, *not my time to leave?* but Will lets it slide by, Hannibal is either part of an hallucination or a really great guy who is doing his best for an unstable customer, and right now he's not sure which he'd prefer.

An arm slips around Will's shoulders and he is shepherded back inside, he is left to stand by the fire, soaked through to his skin, water dripping off him onto a fine old Persian carpet whilst Hannibal goes off to retrieve towels. The whitest, fluffiest, softest towels Will has ever seen.

"You are going to need to get out of your clothes." And then as if sensing Will's discomfort Hannibal adds, "Don't worry no one will look," Hannibal turns his back and as promised no one watches.

When he is dry Will sits down on a stool Hannibal has placed near the fire, he's wrapped in towels. The fire is mesmerising, its colours, its sounds and the warmth, he feels himself leaning into it only to be tugged gently backwards by towel clad fingers massaging damp hair. He should really insist on drying his own hair but Hannibal has taken better care of him than friends and colleagues who have known him for years, so he decides to say nothing and relaxes into those hands.

"I brought you some dry clothes, you can change into them when you are ready."

He's handed a black shirt and trousers, and although they must be Hannibal's, who is taller and broader than the slender FBI profiler, they feel like they were tailored to him.

Will sits in the chair he sat in earlier, he's tired but enjoying this strange if kind of perfect night, *I must be hallucinating* he thinks, only realising he's spoken out loud when Hannibal say,

"You think I'm an hallucination."

He nods his head, flushing slightly, "Yeah." One of the dogs takes that moment to get up from his bed and lie on Will's feet, the other has settled next to Hannibal's chair.

“Does Abel not feel solid against your feet?” Will has to admit he does.

“Honestly, I hallucinate pretty often and vividly.” The man opposite him has to be a hallucination, thinks Will, he’s elegant of physical form and dress, he’s just too pristine after serving drinks, cooking food and keeping the place orderly. He’s an impossibility but even so, Will still finds himself wondering why Hannibal would spend time with his dishevelled, sweaty self.

Hannibal just sits, no hint of the judgement or fear displays of instability can elicit, waiting for Will to continue. Taking a sip of whiskey, Will contemplates how many times he has sat unwillingly and uncooperatively across from psychiatrists but with Hannibal he feels comfortable and he doesn’t mind talking to this man who no longer feels a stranger.

“I, err, raise the dead and possess their killers,” he scratches his scalp, “well at least in my head, it saves lives.”

Hannibal nods, “and steals yours.”

Will closes his eyes and returns the nod, he drags a hand over his forehead, its hard admitting these things.

“Your terrified one day you wont make it back.”

“Yeah,” he replies, wondering how Hannibal became a publican and not a psychiatrist,

“You have few good memories to shore up your defences when other realities threaten to overwhelm yours.”

“I’m fine, really I am” Will murmurs into his whiskey glass.

“Anyone who is with you for any length of time would know that that is not the case.”

Will wants to defend his frie...colleagues from the implied slight but he can’t. He feels a surge of anger at himself, Jack, the serial killers and illogically even the victims but mostly himself. Hannibal though is the only target in the room.

“I spend a few hours at your table and you think you know me better than I know myself,” he spits out, “and don’t tell me you just observe.” He all but snarls, “frustrated psychiatrist.”

“I take it you don’t like psychiatrists,” Will head falls back against leather upholstery, breath released slowly through teeth, “I’m sorry, that’s not really about you, I just get...I’m a jerk sometimes.”

“There is nothing to apologise for, I overstepped the mark.”

Will notices his throat feels a little dry and tight, he coughs to try and clear it but that just makes it worse. “Can’t breathe,” he gasps as his hands go to his throat. It feels less like he cant catch his breath and more like it and the very tissue of his lungs are being ripped out of him. Abel is on all fours, ears back, teeth bared his brother has taken up position in front of

two women a low growl discernible. Unflustered the women's eyes move from Will to the dogs, then to Hannibal.

"Ms Lounds, can I suggest you and your friend withdraw to the dining room and I'll make sure your drinks and food are brought through." The red head woman and her companion give Will one last, shudder inducing, glance then turn on their finely pointed high heels and leave.

Will sits head in hands allowing his breathing to return to normal, he feels Hannibal's hand on his neck he concentrates on the comforting circular movement of dexterous fingers. When he opens his eyes the brothers are sat before him, heads slightly tilted they look to be asking, *are you alright?* Abel offers his paw which Will gladly accepts.

"Am I somewhere I shouldn't be," Will asks of the dogs, "have I walked through a wardrobe into Narnia, because I know what an hallucination feels like and this, this is different." Then turning to Hannibal he asks with some irritation, "Are you going to tell me I'm having a breakdown."

"No, I'm not and would it be so bad to be somewhere Other, if you knew you were protected and you would be home safe and well tomorrow?"

"Safe." Will takes a moment as if pondering the word, then he gives a soft edged grin, "as long as I'm not rude," referring to a sign by the bar, 'Rudeness will not be tolerated.'

"Indeed" Hannibal gives a little huff and there is fondness in his eyes.

They spend another hour or so fading in and out of conversation until the fire is low and Will snuggles deeper and deeper into his chair. So close to sleep he doesn't register the noise of people leaving, doors being locked and tables cleared. He nods heavily as a comforting voice says, "You'll be more comfortable upstairs in bed." "'s alright I can manage" slurs Will, knocking away hands which only sought to help. Those hands though skilfully intervene when he stumbles into a table which refuses to get out of the way. Without help he'd have likely ended up slumped on a step roughly half way up the staircase, or if he was lucky lying on the chaise on the middle landing, but he makes it to a room. There is a large bed in the middle of the room, and much more besides but at this precise moment Will just wants to place his head on a pillow. Weaving slightly he lands on the edge of the bed and somehow manages to get his shirt and trousers off discarding them on the floor. With both hands he takes hold of his glasses slipping them off and folding the arms, then leaning forwards but not so far as to tip over, places them on the bedside table. Mission accomplished he flops back, then after a pause of a minute or so rolls himself under the covers someone has thoughtfully turned down for him.

Will's last thought is that the pillow smells good then he's asleep but not so deep that sometime later he doesn't feel the bed dip. His eyes spring open, he doesn't move, he can't, his brain clicks in but he's not sure its connected to his body. He really doesn't want to have to deal with this, he's not sure he's capable of kneeing the barman in the balls but he'll have a go, if that doesn't work then throwing up should do the trick. He manages to utter something which sounds like a protest, the response is a chuckle and, "Go to sleep Will, nothing will happen, I'm just keeping you safe from the monsters." And the funny thing is Will doesn't

feel anxious anymore and he just drifts off into sleep as if it was the easiest thing in the world.

He wakes to find he has snuggled into Hannibal's neck his arm draped over the older man's chest. Will has some brief thought about not being as disturbed by the feel of another man's chest hair against his bare skin as he would have expected, then he closes his eyes and nuzzles some more. The sun is starting to crack through the curtains when he next surfaces, he has the bed to himself, he can hear a shower somewhere and there is a pleasant smell of lemongrass hanging in the air. *I'll get up soon* he says to himself before turning over again.

Will enjoys the first stretch of the day, arms and legs pulling in opposite direction, arching his back he smiles broadly. He's slept well and whilst a thousand horses couldn't drag him from this bed the smell drifting through the door, left slightly ajar, is much too tempting. His hand feels for his glasses and then he braces himself before sitting up but the expected pain and nausea doesn't come, it's a blessed relief. He puts on the blue robe, which he assumes was left for him, laid out on the trunk at the foot of the bed. There are also some lovely big towels, as well as, a toothbrush, guest soap and several small bottles. Picking up the pile of things Will heads towards the bathroom and sets everything down on a chair in the corner. On closer inspection the small bottles are shampoo and conditioner, flipping the lids he smells lavender and mint. The other bottle is body moisturiser, he doesn't normally use it but a quick sniff reveals a subtle smell clean and fresh. One thing is for certain he's going to leave this place smelling better then when he arrived.

When he has finishes his shower and returns to the bedroom, Will find his, freshly washed and dried, clothes waiting for him. Once dressed he follows his nose in the direction of fresh bread it brings him to a kitchen, not the one used to serve customers but what appears to be Hannibal's very own.

Will hovers at the doorway for a moment watching Hannibal at work before clearing his throat, "This place is bigger than it looks," he says as Hannibal turns to greet him. Will gives his best sheepish grin, "Thanks for taking care of me."

"It was my pleasure," Its meant genuinely Will can tell.

Will has perhaps moved a foot or so into the room, he's still near the door not quite sure what to do with himself. "You have a nice kitchen," he says because he wants to say something nice and its also the truth. Blue skies are visible through the floor to ceiling windows which flood everything from the original dark wood floor boards to the exposed rafters with early morning light. Appliances and work surfaces gleam, no dust or grime cling in hidden places they look well used and well loved. Even after a good nights sleep, a shower and freshly laundered clothing Will still feels frayed at the edges and the most out of place thing in the room.

"Thank you, I have a wing of the building as my private apartments, I like to keep a separation between the public and the private."

"I should be heading off now." Will says with some reluctance.

“Why don’t you just stay for breakfast.” Hannibal motions for his guest to take one of the stools at the island.

Will nods but then finds himself wandering over to what looks to be a herb garden suspended on one of the walls, he sticks his nose in amongst the greenery, *definitely real* he thinks with a raised eye brow. He snaps a bit of basil rubbing it between his fingers as he saunters back to the island. Out of place on the white marble top are a beaten up old leather wallet and a phone which has seen better days.

“Thank God,” he says as he pockets his missing items, “Where did you find them?”

“I found them this morning when I was inspecting the nook where you ate.”

“Oh, thank you, I can pay you for the food and drink now.”

“No, I wont hear of it,” Hannibal firmly shakes his head, he turns from the oven and smiles at Will, “I know we haven’t known each other long, but I feel I can call you friend and I don’t charge my friends.”

“Oh,” Will isn’t quite sure how to respond, he’s not used to people wanting to be his friend except as a pretence for writing a paper on him. Hannibal doesn’t want to write a paper does he, no why would he, he has better things to do with his time. If the truth be known Will’s not used to wanting to be someone’s friend, he’s sort of forgotten how to do it, “Ok, yeah, friends,” he shifts uncomfortably from foot to foot, eyeing the floor, “yeah, I can do that.” He thinks he can, well he’d like to try, he hopes it wont be too arduous an experience for Hannibal. “I still feel I owe you something though.”

Will watches as Hannibal stoops to open a base cupboard and then hears “catch” as something is hurled through the air at him, his reflexes don’t fail and he catches the missile before it hits the side of his head.

“Make yourself useful and play fetch with the boys.” Its a beaten up old rope ball, blue, red and white twine unfurling in split ends, “Its one of their favourite things, they’ll love you for it.” Will wants to wipe the smirk off Hannibal’s face but wagging tails and two sets of adoring, excited eyes, yes they are red, win his attention.

“You’re good with dogs Will, do you have any?” asks Hannibal as he sets plates, cutlery and glasses down on the kitchen table.

“Seven, all rescues.” Will looks Hannibal in the face, he wants to see his reaction.

“I should think that’s quite a handful.” Got to give Hannibal credit, there isn’t the slightest hint of surprise, if anything it’s more like admiration.

“Yeah, sometimes, but they give back much more than they take, I’m sure you understand.”

“You should bring them here, Abel and Cain would love to meet them they are very polite with other dogs.”

“Yeah, I think they’d like that.”

“Next Sunday, 3ish?”

“OK,” Will throws the ball into the far corner of the room, there is a clatter of nails against wood flooring, Abel wins but Cain’s teeth catch some loose ends a tug of war commences. The normally unsociable FBI profiler cant help but wonder how he went from ordering a glass of whiskey to making a friend and arranging a play date for his dogs.

The end

End Notes

1) Hannibal is a very powerful dark being, possibly the devil, he magic'd away Wills wallet and phone to make the agent feel grateful to him and aid his long term goal of seducing him
2) The whiskey mentioned is very expensive a bottle sold for $11000 it comes in a small crate with a stags head on it - appropriate
3) The group of guys at the bar are werewolves
4) Freddie is some sort of necromancer
5) No one else has sat in the chair near the fire Cain and Abel wont allow it
6) This Will is probably closest to season one Will
7) If you made it to the end thank you very much

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